THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

AND ITS

Characteristics

OF

UNITY,

PEACE AND PURITY.

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The Church of Christ.

"And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

"And I say unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church: and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." (Mat. XVI; 16, 18.)

"For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." (I Cor. III; 11)

THE confession of Peter, "Thou art the Christ the son of the living God," contains the fundamental principle of the office of Christ as Prophet, Priest, and King. Upon Christ's sinlessness, his fulfillment of the law by perfect obedience, his sacrificial offering or atonement upon the cross, his resurrection and ascension to the right hand of the Father—upon these as a foundation. he has built his church, and all the strategy and intrigues of the devil, together with temporal death shall not prevail against it.

The church consists of true and faithful individuals who have awakened to a knowledge of their sins, have repented and forsaken their former course of life, and have

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sought and obtained pardon and peace by faith in the merit and righteousness of Jesus Christ. Such regenerated persons are renewed to the divine image and are heirs of the heavenly inheritance.

The church of Christ, as visibly organized upon the earth, was established on the day of Pentecost; at which time three thousand souls were truly converted. By the preaching of the Apostles they were convinced of their guilt, and gladly received the message of free salvation. Their conversion was sudden but not transient, and was a real change wrought in their souls by the Holy Spirit. They were steadfast in the Apostles' doctrine, and "They that gladly received his word were baptized; and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls." (Acts 2:41.)

In what we will present concerning the character of the Church of Christ we will consider, first, The unity of the Church; secondly, Its peaceable character, and lastly, Its purity.

We will first consider the scriptural testimony confirmatory of the doctrine of the unity of the church; and we ask our dear friends who read these pages to have patience with us while we direct their attention to a few of the many figures, types

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and predictions of the Old Testament which bear on the subject under consideration.

THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH.

In the garden of Eden we find a clear type or figure of the church in Eve, the mother of mankind. Adam, in whom the human race began, was a type of Christ—of him through whom the race should be restored. The deep sleep of Adam, the opening of his side, and the forming of Eve from the rib taken from his side, and the consequent union between them, so fittingly expressed by Adam, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh"—a complete and indissoluble union—are true figures of Christ's death, of the opening of his side, of his resurrection, and of the regeneration of his people wrought through his death, whom he accepts as his church and bride. The apostle Paul bears witness to this when he writes upon marriage: "This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church." (Eph. v:32.) "My dove, my undefiled is but one; she is the only one of her mother, she is the choice one of her that bare her." (Sol. vi:9.)

Solomon wrote figuratively and prophetically of the church, under the figure of the bride and bridegroom. He represents the love of Christ for his church, and her devotion to him. His language clearly witnesses the unity of the spouse or church of Christ.

The Hebrews and their worship were a type of the church and of unity. On that memorable night when the destroying angel passed through the land of Egypt and slew the firstborn of all the Egyptians, but passed over the houses of the Hebrews, they were separated from the Egyptians, and were in their houses, sheltered by the blood of the Pascal lamb. "And the blood shall be to you for a token, and when I see the blood I will pass over you." (Exodus xii:13.) The blood upon the side posts and the upper door posts of their houses, was representative of the blood of Jesus Christ which saves all those who believe in him. By virtue of the blood, the first born of the Hebrews were saved from death, and they as a people and congregation were effectually separated from the Egyptians.

The Pascal lamb was to be without blemish, a male of the first year. It was to be offered whole, not a bone to be broken: "In one house shall it be eaten: thou shalt not carry forth aught of the flesh abroad out of

the house." The roasting of the passover lamb is a fitting representation of the sufferings of Christ for us. The unleavened bread represents the actual separation from sin by all who are redeemed by his blood. The bitter herbs symbolize the suffering of the saints for Christ's sake. To be associated with Christ in his glory we must also be associated with him in his suffering. The Hebrews, or literal Israel, were sheltered by the blood of the lamb; they were separated from the Egyptians, shut up in their houses, one united people, in the attitude of pilgrims, with their loins girded, their shoes on their feet and their staves in their hands. They were truly a fitting type of the spiritual Israel redeemed by the blood of Christ, associated with him by living faith, and united with one another by love.

We have testimony that the literal Israel is a figure of the spiritual Israel, or church of Jesus Christ. God made choice of Israel as a peculiar treasure. The feast of the passover had significance only to them. The tabernacle, and afterwards the temple, was designed only for that peculiar people. Since all the males were circumcised to qualify them for the enjoyment of the immunities, privileges and blessings of an Israelite, it clearly follows that all true be-

lievers in Jesus Christ are "circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ." To the literal Israel there was one law for the home-born and for the stranger. To the spiritual Israel or church of Christ there is but one rule of life: "Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like-minded one toward another according to Christ Jesus." (Romans xv: 5, 6.)

THE TEMPLE AS A TYPE.

The temple at Jerusalem symbolized the true temple not made with hands, whose maker and builder is God. "Ye are God's building." (1 Cor. iii: 9.) "Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord." (Eph. ii: 21.) Through regeneration souls are restored to the divine life, become spiritually minded and have fellowship one with another. Such souls constitute the spiritual temple, of which the literal temple was a type. "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matt. xviii: 20.)

The temple built by Solomon was a fit type of the church. The material was pre-

pared before it was brought thither, "so that there was neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron heard in the house while it was building." (1 Kings vi:7.) This figure or type should impress all seriously disposed persons because of the frequent allusions to it by the Apostles. In the preparation of the material for the building of the literal temple different classes of workmen were employed. The felling of the trees and the quarrying of the stones was one service; the dressing and squaring of the material was another; the placing of it was still another service. In the economy of the salvation of sinners and the rearing of the spiritual temple there are different stages of preparatory work.

The Sinaitic law—the ministration of condemnation—renders the first service to the slumbering sinner. Its proclamation is in effect, "Awake thou that sleepest." Its work was manifest on the day of Pentecost when three thousand persons were awakened to a sense of their lost condition and exclaimed, "Men and brethren what shall we do?" The service of felling the lofty cedars, and that of lifting the massive and ill-shapen stones from their resting places preparatory to the building of the literal tem-

ple was representative of the service of the law to the sinner.

JOHN THE BAPTIST.

The ministration of John the Baptist follows that of the law. "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, and make his paths straight." "And he shall turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to the fathers." (Mal. iv:6.) John taught repentance and reformation of life. The sound of the trumpet exceedingly loud, and the peals of thunder from mount Sinai are no more heard; the ascending smoke as of a furnace, and the quaking of the mount are no more witnessed, yet the law once engraven on tables of stone still survives. It continues to be the ministration of condemnation—the schoolmaster to bring sinners to Christ. John the Baptist's once familiar and well known form has long since disappeared from earth, but his mission lives—that of preparing the heart for the reception of Christ. The effect of his ministration was, and is yet, a moral reformation. Jesus Christ the heavenly architect perfects the material. He will pardon from sin; he will renew, recreate, and sanctify them and make them fit material for the spiritual temple. "Ye who were dead in

sins and trespasses hath he quickened." "Ye also as lively stones are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." (1 Peter ii:5.) "For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them and walk in them, and I will be their God and they shall be my people." (2 Cor. vi:16.) "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God and that the spirit of God dwelleth in you?" Here the Apostles use figurative language to show how the literal temple and its service were typical of the spiritual temple and service. The temple was the center of the worship of Jehovah, for all acceptable worship had reference to the temple service.

Instructive lessons may also be drawn from the inner arrangement of the temple. The vail separating the holy place from the most holy showed that the handwriting of ordinances was not yet removed, and that the way was not yet open for admittance to fellowship and communion with God. The vail is taken away in Christ. The High Priest who entered the holy of holies once a year to make an offering for his own sins and for the sins of all the people, was a fit type of Jesus Christ who entered the true holy of holies with his own blood

and made a perpetual offering for the sins of his people.

The ark of the covenant was made of shittim wood overlaid with gold, and above upon it was the mercy seat of solid gold, and on each end a cherubim facing each other and covering with their wings the whole surface. The ark contained the two tables of the law, Aaron's rod and the golden pot of manna. The ark may be considered a figure of a sanctified heart; the wood representing our humanity, the covering of gold typifying the righteousness of Christ. The law written upon tables of stone was a symbol of the law of life in Christ Jesus written upon the fleshy table of the heart; the mercy seat of pure gold was a fit emblem of Jesus Christ who was sinless—the embodiment of all that is good, the Savior of mankind; the two cherubim were figures of the Old and New Covenant. The law and the prophets point forward to Christ, and the Gospel directs us to what Christ has accomplished.

THE LEVITICAL PRIESTHOOD.

The Levites and their service at the temple were figurative of the service of John the Baptist and his disciples. The service of the Levites was preparatory. They

served the priests in the ministrations of the temple and brought to them the things necessary for the sacrifices. They had themselves to be prepared for their office. "Thus shalt thou do unto them to cleanse them: sprinkle water of purifying upon them and let them shave all their flesh, and let them wash their clothes, and so make themselves clean. (Numbers viii:7.) The priests were a figure of the redeemed of the Lord under the new covenant—"Ye are a royal priesthood." Every Christian is a priest, for he, through the Spirit, offers his body a living sacrifice holy and acceptable to God. He seeks to glorify his Creator in body and spirit.

UNITY FORETOLD BY PROPHECY.

"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord. But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my law in their inward

parts, and write it in their hearts, and will be their God, and they shall be my people: and they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sins no more." (Jer. xxxi:31-34.) Paul in his epistle to the Hebrews (viii:8-14,) is witness that the prediction of the prophet was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost, and that it will continue to be fulfilled in God's people until the end of time. Christ obtained an everlasting victory over sin, death and hell, by virtue of his fulfillment of the holy law in all its extensive spiritual requirements, and through his atoning sacrifice, resurrection and ascension to the right-hand of the Father. The power of this victory he now by his Spirit communicates to all those who believe in him unto salvation. Such constitute the true Israel of God, who are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, upon whose hearts he writes his law; and they become his epistle which may be read of all men. Having the same law, they will have the same rule of life.

THE SHEPHERD AND THE SHEEP.

In the gospel of St. John unity is taught in such language that should be comprehensible to every one. In the tenth chapter Christ uses his sheep as a type or figure of his people. Sheep instinctively collect together and form one flock. Christ is the shepherd; all true believers are his sheep; they know his voice and they follow him whithersoever he leads them. In the sixteenth verse he says, "And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also must I bring and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold and one shepherd." Here Christ alludes to the Gentiles who should believe in him, and should hear his voice and follow him. Here the language of the Apostle (Col. iii: 10, 11.) fitly applies: "And have put on the new man which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him. Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ is all, and in all." In this parable Christ represents himself as the true shepherd of all the sheep. He also represents his ministers as shepherds who are divinely appointed to minister to and care for the flock. To them the Spirit opens the hidden treasures of the Gospel, so that

they can feed the flock. The ministers of Jesus Christ willingly assume oversight of the flock out of love, not for filthy lucre; and the sheep, or the members of the church, hear and follow them, for they know their voice. The ministers dispense to them the bread of life, or the word of God; and the members obey them and love them as those who watch over their souls. When such relations prevail they will prosper and be under the promise of the divine blessing, for such together constitute the church of the living God, the ground and pillar of the truth.

THE VINE AND THE BRANCHES.

In the first part of the 15th chapter of John, Christ compares himself to a vine and his followers to branches of the vine: "I am the vine and ye are the branches." Since the branches of a natural vine partake of the nature and the character of the vine, it follows that the branches in the true spiritual vine, Jesus Christ, partake of his nature. This parable most clearly teaches that all true believers are united by true living faith. The divine life within the soul is nourished by union with Christ, to which Paul bears witness: "Nevertheless I live, yet not I but Christ liveth in me;

and the life that I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me, and gave himself for me." (Gal. ii; 20.) Some of our friends who maintain that the branches in the vine represent the different churches or denominations, try to support divisions by the above parable. Such a claim is untenable, for the following reasons: If the different denominations were branches in the vine, they would receive spiritual life from it and produce the same kind of fruit, and they would be of one mind, joined in the same judgment, and would speak the same thing, which would end divisions, since there would no longer be a cause for them. Every intelligent person knows that such unity as here mentioned does not exist among the professors of the Christian religion. For example, there are those of our friends who maintain that it is lawful for Christians to swear a legal oath, to sue at the law to obtain justice, to wage just wars, to baptize infants, to retain known unrepentant sinners in the church, and that they may differ in doctrine and practice to such an extent as to necessitate separate organizations. There are others of our friends who testify earnestly against many of these privileges, and refuse the communion to

those holding such views. There are others who reject all of these privileges and practices as anti-christian. How can any one claim that these are all branches in the vine and partake of the divine nature? Such discordant elements cannot possibly emanate from the Lord.

CHRIST'S PRAYER FOR UNITY.

In John xvii is recorded Christ's high-priestly prayer: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which believe on me through their word; that they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe thou hast sent me." This prayer Christ offered in behalf of all his people until the end of time. It impresses the mind with the idea of a real unity. Christ primarily prayed for his disciples, probably including the seventy, that they might be united in faith and practice; but he also prayed for those who through all time should believe on him through their word that they also should be in perfect unity. Every Christian believes that Christ's prayer reflected the divine will and therefore was answered. The result of Christ's redemption could not be anything but unity. He came to take the armor

from the strong man armed, to destroy his work in the hearts of men, to renew them to the divine image and to bring them into harmony with the divine economy. On the day of Pentecost the above prayer was verified: "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul." (Acts. iv.: 32.)

The human body is used as a figure of the unity of the church, being composed of many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ. For by one spirit are we all baptized into one body whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one spirit." (1 Cor. xii:12, 13.) "But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ; from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, making increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." (Eph. iv:15, 16.)

ORDINANCES POINT TO UNITY.

The ordinances commanded by Jesus Christ and required of his church, carry

with them the lesson of unity. There are three: Baptism, the Lord's Supper and Feet-washing. "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." (Mat. 28:19, 20.)

According to this command no one shall be admitted as a member of the church unless he has come to a saving knowledge of the God-head. In John xvii we read, "This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." It is generally conceded that no one should be received into the church unless he believes in and accepts Jesus Christ as the savior of sinners. He cannot realize His saving power until he has attained to a knowledge of the purity and holiness of God; and, through the spirituality of this knowledge, has realized his defiled and lost condition, and can appreciate and accept the offer of peace and pardon by faith in Jesus Christ. "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Rom. v:1.)

Penitent, believing persons are proper

subjects for baptism and church membership. They may be baptized in the name of the Father, since they recognize his righteousness, his love and his mercy; in the name of the Son, since they accept him as their righteousness, sanctification and redemption; in the name of the Holy Ghost, since they have come under his enlightening and purifying influence.

A fit subject for baptism is in harmony with the heavenly economy, which includes the exercise of supreme love to God and the practice of loving his neighbors as himself. Wanting this change no one can fitly be baptized in the names of the Trinity. Baptism is a representation of having by faith put on Christ with his cleansing virtues. This ordinance is representative of union with Christ, and is designed as an induction into the visible church, which is the earthly home of saved souls. It clearly involves the idea of unity.

Water baptism will not avail without the spiritual baptism. The prophet Joel foretold this baptism: "I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh: and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit." (Joel 2:28, 29.) When Peter witnessed the Holy Ghost falling upon Cornelius and those of his

house, he remembered the word of the Lord: "Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost." John the Baptist testified: "He that cometh after me shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." For, "as many as are baptized into Jesus Christ are baptized into his death." It is the soul that is baptized into Christ by the Holy Ghost. Believers or Christians have died unto sin, and have by faith arisen to newness of life, and have been freed from the law of sin and death by the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus. They are led by the spirit of God and are sons and daughters of God. They are baptized by one spirit into one body and made to drink into one Spirit. There is one body and one Spirit, one God who is father of all.

From what has been presented the following conclusions are reached: First, Water baptism is an initiatory ordinance into the visible church of Christ. "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized; and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls." (Acts 2:41.) Secondly, It is a representation or expression of an inward state, viz., of a death to sin, crucifixion with Christ and of a spiritual resurrection, and of a consecration of body and soul to the Lord. "The like fig-

ure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us, not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." (1 Peter iii:21.) No one can have the answer of a good conscience, but by living, saving faith in Christ. Thirdly, It is a fruit of obedience. "Here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?" (Acts viii:36.) "But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. (Acts viii:12.)

THE EUCHARIST, OR COMMUNION.

Communion consists of breaking the bread and drinking the cup. "And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." (Matt. xxvi:26-28.) Luke adds the Lord's words: "This do in remembrance of me." "For I have received of the Lord that which I also delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was

betrayed, took bread: and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take eat, this is my body, which is broken for you, this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come." (1 Cor. xi:23-26.)

By this ordinance the church commemorates the death of Christ. His death involves the fullfilment of the holy law, his atoning sacrifice upon the cross, and triumphant resurrection and ascension to the Father. Its effects are the taking of the armor from the strong man armed, the destruction of the work of the devil in the hearts of Christ's people, the restoration to the soul of the divine love and image, and the consequent gathering together of the children of God, who were scattered abroad. In order that the church may show forth Christ's death, she must stand in the power of his death. To be in that relation is to have the spirit and life of Christ and the consequent unity: "For we being many are one bread and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread." (1 Cor. x:17.)

FEET-WASHING.

For authority for the observance of this ordinance, see John xiii. Feet washing emblematically reminds us of the washing by the atonement and teaches the need, which all believers experience, of the service of Christ as Intercessor in washing them of their daily defilements. It is also expressive of the washing of one another by the fellowship of love in humility and forbearance; and of the practice of reclaiming erring members by admonition and reproof.

We invite the attention of the reader to a scripture we deem very important, which is little regarded by the great mass of Christian professors. It is the specific rule given to the church by our dear Lord and Savior for her preservation in the unity of the spirit and the bond of peace: "Moreover if thy brother trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone. If he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother; but if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican." (Matt. xviii.)

This scripture very forcibly teaches the doctrine of unity, brotherly love and Christian fellowship, and is figuratively illustrated in the ordinance of feet-washing. By participating in this ordinance all show a willingness to submit to and serve each other spiritually, and it is expressive of the washing of water by the word. For any body of people to observe feet-washing when these conditions and relations do not exist, they make themselves guilty of hypocrisy. All the redeemed of the Lord are brethren, and they are fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God. If brethren, they are solemnly bound to love and serve each other; and no matter where the church is located, she is one and the same in faith and doctrine.

The seven churches of Asia, of which we read in Revelation, were organizations located in different parts of Asia Minor. The church at one place was the same in faith and practice as at other places. It is true a church or organized body of believers in one locality may become too carnal, lose much of the light and power of the Christian life, and suffer errors to come in, as was the case with five of these churches, as also with the church at Corinth, when she retained for a time a notorious sinner, and

was puffed up notwithstanding her affliction. But in consequence of the unity of the church, such decline will be discovered by members who remain faithful, and will be reported to the church, or elders of the church at other places where the church has continued sound in doctrine, who will visit such declining church, discover and reprove the unfaithful ones and labor for their correction.

If such labor is not successful, they will separate the erring ones from the church, and not cease in their labor until order and soundness in faith and practice are attained. Thus the apostles labored in all the churches where there was a decline in the spiritual life.

In the command, "If thy brother trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone," it will readily be perceived that unless professed Christians are united in faith and doctrine, this command is impracticable. If the popular view is correct that Christians may be divided in faith and practice to such an extent, as to result in separate and distinct organizations called churches, and that it makes no difference to which of these churches persons belong, if they only do what is right, then this specific and positive

command of Jesus must be ignored. If it be true that the members of these different churches are Christians, then they are brethren, and are commanded by Christ to serve each other in love, to the extent that if a brother errs, he who is cognizant of it, is solemnly bound to tell him of his fault; but, if he does not hear him, he must take one or two more with him and labor for his recovery; and if he will not hear these, the matter is to be brought before the church; and if he will not hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican, that is, separate him from the church.

Does not every god-fearing person see that such procedure as Christ commanded is impossible under the present conditions of divided Christianity? Few if any members of the many churches recognize that such duties devolve upon them toward members of other denominations, or even realize that it is a duty they owe toward those with whom they are associated in church fellowship. The popular view that true believers can be divided in doctrine and practice, and constitute separate and distinct organizations, is at variance with New Testament teaching, and therefore should be condemned by all true disciples of Christ.

If unity of the church is a scriptural doctrine, or in plainer language, if there is but one church of Christ, the same in faith and practice everywhere, the withdrawal of true believers from unfaithful worship will follow as a consequence.

Those who defend divisions are recognized by the holy writers as enemies to the true and saving doctrine of Christ. "Mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them." (Rom. xvi:17) "And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him; for they know not the voice of strangers." (John x:4, 5) "He that transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ hath not God. If there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed." (2 John 9, 10.) Christ called his church a sheepfold, and used the sheep to represent the character of his true followers. Sheep never divide, but always flock together, feed upon the same pasture, and obey the same shepherd. And Paul in 1 Cor. 12, illustrates the unity of the church by comparing it with the natural body.

Every member must be subject to the head so there be no schisms in the body. The many members constitute one harmonious body, which could not exist otherwise. Christ is supreme Head of his church, and as the Godhead is essentially one, there can be no scriptural ground for divisions.

True charity influences us to love our neighbors as ourselves. When we transgress the doctrine of Christ, we are reproved by his Spirit and are constrained through divine love to repent of our sins, and to confess and forsake them. When we see our neighbors and friends, who profess to be Christians, transgress scriptural teachings, love will constrain us to separate from their worship, and thus testify against it. The principle of love constrains the redeemed to stand aloof from the unrighteous practices of the disobedient. The members of the church of Christ will not hear the preachers of those who sanction divisions, nor unite in their worship. They will be constrained to pursue this course through true love, to warn them of their error and of the danger to which their souls are exposed.

THE PEACE OF THE CHURCH.

The Gospel peace, as it relates to each individual believer, is that state of mind and heart which results from a living faith in the merit and righteousness of Christ. "Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Rom. v:1.) It is a peace above all understanding, the witness of a good conscience and fellowship with God.

The peace of the church is the effect of the spiritual union of each believer with Christ. "Fulfill ye my joy that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind." (Phil. ii:2.) "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger be put away from you, with all malice, and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." (Eph. iv:31, 32.) "Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to

the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful." (Col. iii:12-16.) By the above scripture testimony it is fully demonstrated that the members of the true church must be at peace with one another.

When Christ, the Great Head of the church, first appeared on earth as an infant child, the angels of God celebrated his birth by the proclamation: "On the earth peace and good will to men." This message was confirmatory of prophetic teaching: "And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." (Is. 2:4.) "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them." (Isaiah xii:6.)

The above and many other prophetic testimonies figuratively portray and foretell a condition of peace in which there shall be none to destroy nor waste. The prophets spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit; but it did not dwell in them as an abiding sanctifying power as it dwells in the hearts of the truly regenerated under

the Gospel dispensation, which is spiritual. He was with them and inspired them with the knowledge of what was then many centuries in the future, yet they did not have a clear understanding of their own utterances. When Peter confessed, "Thou art the Christ the son of the living God," he was inspired by the Holy Spirit; yet he did not comprehend all that was involved in his confession. He did not understand Christ's mission nor his kingdom. It was not possible that the prophets, nor the disciples before the Holy Ghost came upon them as an enlightening and regenerating principle could understand the mysteries of redemption. All mankind were involved in the fall and suffered the effects of it. These were an enfeebling of the moral powers, a disability which descended upon all Adam's posterity, resulting in hardness of heart and a darkened understanding. The divine judgment upon man was: "They are altogether gone out of the way and the way of peace they have not known." Christ's testimony upon this point is all-sufficient: "Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again." (John iii:7) Mark his direct address to his disciples: "Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the

kingdom of heaven." (Mat. xviii:3.) The foregoing texts should settle the question of the relation of Old Testament believers, and of Christ's disciples, to his kingdom. See John's remarks, Jno. 7:39. If the disciples were unconverted men, in the full spiritual sense, while Christ was personally with them, then surely the Old Testament believers were unregenerated. This is why they were allowed to exact justice, and resist evil.

NON-RESISTANCE OF EVIL.

According to the civil or judicial regulation under the law of Moses to which our Lord so frequently refers, his people could carry their grievances before the judges or magistrates. Their rule in deciding cases was, "Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe." The civil law was based upon justice. It did not authorize private revenge. Injured persons were expected to present their grievances to the properly appointed authorities, where testimony would be received and the verdict rendered upon the principles of justice. The law of Moses no more sanctions the right of private revenge by the infliction of personal injury upon the offender

through the complainant than does the civil law under our enlightened institutions. It is then very apparent that Christ forbids a privilege to his disciples which was allowed to the believers under the old law.

The question naturally arises, why this difference? For the reason already noted, man's relation to God is changed by virtue of his regeneration and adoption into the family of God. Note well the change: "Ye have heard that it hath been said, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth, but I say unto you that ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also." (Mat. v:38-40.) "But I say unto you, love your enemies," etc., verse 44.

Every lover of truth and sound doctrine will admit that the above precepts are designed to promote peace and good will, and are in harmony with the divine economy, which is to love God supremely and one's neighbor as himself. He will also admit that they are directly opposed to the dictates of carnal reason. This latter fact proves the necessity of a change in man.

After Christ had fulfilled the law, atoned for sin upon the cross, triumphed over death

and ascended to the right hand of the Father, he sent the Holy Ghost upon his disciples, whereby they were regenerated and fitted to preach the everlasting Gospel of peace and pardon. On the day of Pentecost the disciples preached with great power to a large congregation. The word preached was the power of God unto salvation to all who believed. Regenerated souls were in harmony with Christ's doctrine and life. Christ taught the Jews not to seek the kingdom of heaven by outward observation, but to seek it within themselves.

CHRIST'S KINGDOM ESTABLISHED.

On the day of Pentecost the kingdom of Jesus Christ came upon the earth and was established in the hearts of the truly converted; those who had become partakers of the divine nature and had been renewed to the divine image. On that memorable occasion was fulfilled the angelic proclamation: "On the earth peace." The reign of peace has not ended; but has been continued in the hearts and lives of the saints for nearly nineteen hundred years. This is the true Millenium, or reign of a thousand years, intervening as a full period of time between the out-pouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, and the final day

when Christ will subject his reign to the Father.

True Christians are "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people." (1 Peter ii:9.) Christ by his spirit possesses the hearts of his people, ruling and reigning therein, and giving power to overcome sin and to live sanctified lives. The members of the church of Christ do not defend their persons, reputations or property, either by physical force or by process of law. Thus they keep in harmony with the positive commands of Jesus, and with his example: "Who when he was reviled, reviled not again, and when he suffered he threatened not." To be smitten in the face would be a personal indignity and insult; yet Christ teaches as plainly as language can make it that we must not resent such injury. "When men shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake, rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven." (Mat. v:11,12.)

A Christian can bear those injuries with comfort, through faith in Jesus Christ. It is a healthful discipline for the soul. No one will injure an innocent person unless he who commits the injury is in gross darkness, and for such the heart of a believer yearns. If one should prefer an unjust

claim against a disciple of Jesus, sue him and unjustly take his property from him, he would not defend it by civil process or otherwise, no matter how much he might need it.

Litigation promotes strife. Neighbors becoming involved in a lawsuit naturally become estranged from each other. It does not promote confidence nor good feeling, and therefore is incompatible with Christianity. "But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish." (James iii:14, 15.)

CHRIST'S KINGDOM NOT OF THIS WORLD.

We cannot conceive how any one can claim to be a Christian and yet engage in litigation contrary to the express command of Christ. As Christians are forbidden to go to law, they certainly cannot go to war. "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence." (John xviii:36.)

Christ confessed before Pilate that he was a king, but his kingdom was not of this

world; that it had nothing to do with men's temporal affairs; it would not interfere with existing worldly governments, and that there was no cause for jealousy on the part of earthly monarchs. It clearly appears from his language that his kingdom is not an earthly one, and can not be defended by carnal weapons, nor be made subsidiary to carnal ends, for secular advantage. It is altogether of another nature, having entirely different aims and ends in view, from those of worldly kingdoms.

Scott's exposition, in his Commentary, of John xviii:33-36, sustains the above view. In his comment on Isaiah ii;4 he makes the following assertion: "If all men were consistent Christians, there could be no war." Probably all commentators arrive at this conclusion, and we can not conceive how they can do otherwise.

From the preceding Scripture testimony we conclude that Christ by his spirit reigns in the hearts of his people, and hence earthly rulers and their kingdoms are not interfered with. Since he sought no earthly dominion, his followers who are strangers and pilgrims on earth, seeking and longing for a heavenly home, will not contend and fight for an earthly kingdom.

CHRISTIANITY AND WAR.

It is generally admitted that if all men were Christians there could be no war. War is of the devil; for if he had not sown the evil seed of strife into the hearts of our first parents, there would not have been war on this earth. Christ came to destroy the work of the devil, hence it follows that warring will cease among Christians, since he gives them power to become sons of God. He compares his followers to sheep, as before observed. Sheep have no means of defense against their enemies, they live upon herbage, and seek safety in flight. The sheep is a fit emblem of the defenseless and inoffensive character of the Christian. The prophet foretelling the crucifixion of Christ, says, "He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb so he openeth not his mouth." (Isaiah liii:7.)

Many of our friends frankly admit that the doctrine of the non-resistance of evil, or passive submission to insult and injury, is certainly right, but they say it is inapplicable to the present state of the world. They say government is a necessity for the protection of the good and the punishment of the wicked, and that government or rule, implies the existence of laws, and laws to

be productive of good, must be enforced by the sword, when necessary. They quote as authority Romans xiii: "The powers that be are ordained of God." Again: "For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil."

We freely admit that government is an ordinance of God and designed for the preservation of order in the world, by protecting those who do well and punishing the evildoers. Any system of worldly authority or government is preferable to anarchy. Christians are taught by precept and example to honor the magistracy by obedience to its laws in all things wherein they are not antagonistic to the higher law of Jesus Christ. They conscientiously pay whatever taxes or charges are levied upon them. Our Lord covered the whole ground of duty when he said, "Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's; and unto God the things which are God's." Our temporal possessions and privileges are under Cæsar's dominion, hence taxes are due to Cæsar.

All our faculties of mind and soul are the Lord's. We are called upon to glorify God

in our bodies and souls, which we can do only by obedience to his will; and since he has taught us not to fight with carnal weapons, if we love him, we will also obey him. We have been told by prominent professors of religion that the peace doctrine is right, but according to that teaching, a foreign nation could come and destroy our government, and bring the nation into a state of subjection, which they would consider intolerable. This reminds us of the conference held by the Jews and its conclusions: "If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him; and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation." (John xi:48.)

PRACTICABILITY OF NON-RESISTANCE.

To avoid these embarrassments we need only to keep in view that Christ's kingdom is spiritual, separate and distinct from the kingdoms of this world. Its laws and regulations are in many respects opposite to earthly kingdoms. If all men would embrace the spirit and doctrine of Christ, this embarrassment could not exist, as the sword would then be sheathed and war would have no existence; for mankind would be governed by the higher law: "Love thy neighbor as thyself." "As ye would that

men should do to you, do ye even so to them."

Christians are chosen out of the world and are preserved from the evil that is in it; they are citizens of the heavenly kingdom, the principles of which are supreme love to God, and loving one's neighbor as himself. If they are called to peace they will not secure justice by force, and therefore will not bear arms; and if they may not bear arms, they will not hold offices and administer justice, neither will they exercise the privilege of voting to place men in office.

The apparent difficulty in reconciling the above conclusion with the admitted necessity of government vanishes when we separate the two kingdoms. The kingdom of this world, or worldly government, is only a necessity on account of the unconverted world; therefore, the rulers are necessitated to compel ill-disposed persons to obey the laws and if need be use force in so doing. This a Christian will not do, therefore he can not be used in the administration of the government.

In the kingdom of Christ, love is the controlling principle; hence those who have been renewed to the divine image, and become partakers of the divine nature, are

adapted to that kingdom. If Christians are at liberty to engage in law-suits, and in times of war to fight for their country, where is the evidence that Christ was upon earth and wrought redemption? Where is the evidence that he brought peace on earth and good will to men? Where is the fruit of his agonizing death and triumph over the world, over sin and the devil? O friends, reflect upon the seriousness of this matter while you have opportunity.

THE PURITY OF THE CHURCH.

"Even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. v:25-27.) Paul writes to Titus: "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." It is apparent that Christ designed that his people should be a living epistle that could be read of all men. One of his weighty injunctions is, "Let your light so shine be-

fore men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

By the purity of the church we do not mean that there will be no failings, or that there will not be those who will backslide and even fall from grace, neither do we claim that there may not be hypocrites in the fold; but what we do claim, with authority from Christ and his apostles, is that the church of Christ will not retain known, unrepentant sinners in its congregation. The church will exclude all such who sin willfully and knowingly; such as drunkards, adulterers, extortioners and all who presumptuously transgress the doctrine of Christ; and not only those, but also such as grow cold, careless and prayerless, who lose the love for Jesus and his people, and justify wrongdoing.

A NOTABLE COMMAND.

We again refer to the text in Matt. xviii. "If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone; if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if

he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican."

The above is a notable command; it is an emanation of love. There is not a more specific rule given in the New Testament. It is the only means whereby love, confidence, freedom and true Christian courtesy can be maintained among believers. The observance of it is especially important where members have daily communication with one another; and we venture the assertion that there can be no perfect harmony in any organization on this earth without the practice of this rule.

From this command it is evident that Christ designed that his church should be kept pure. The sins alluded to are not willful, overt acts, or gross sins, but sins of inadvertance resulting from want of watchfulness and prayer. Two brethren may have daily intercourse with each other; one may offend the other by being too hasty, or too light-minded; or he may err in some business transaction, manifesting too much selfishness. In whatever way he offends or weakens his fellow-believer, it is the duty of the offended one to tell the offender of his fault in the spirit of love and meekness,

If he confesses his fault he has won him, and no one outside of those two persons should know anything about it, and thus love and confidence will be maintained. But if the erring one will not hear, then the offended member shall take one or two brethren with him, and they shall hear the case. If they agree that the accused is in fault, they will labor further with him; and if he sees his error and confesses, he will be forgiven, and love will prevail. But if he hears not these, they shall tell it unto the church; if he hears the church and confesses his sin, he will be forgiven of God and of the church, and charity will have triumphed.

Since those who commit sins of weakness and justify themselves in them, are to be labored with so perseveringly, and if they do not repent, are to be excommunicated, is it not evident that open sinners, such as extortioners, railers, drunkards, liars, adulterers, and all who willfully transgress the word of God, must be separated from the church? "Now we command you brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us." (2 Thes. iii:6.) "For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working

not at all, but are busy bodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread. And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed." (2 Thess. iii:11-14.). In 1 Cor:5, Paul reproves the Corinthians for retaining a fornicator in the church. "And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you. "Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?" "Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person." Could language make anything plainer?

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF COMMUNION.

In commemorating the suffering and death of Jesus Christ by the observance of the Communion by partaking of the bread and wine, the church lays off a testimony of her purity. "The bread which we break is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread." (1 Cor. x:16, 17.) This text indicates that all who partake of the emblems of the broken body and shed blood

of Christ express thereby that they love the Lord Jesus, and are also in spiritual communion and fellowship with him. It follows that no one who is sincere will commune with a known sinner, even if he be a member of the church. How could he encourage another in that which would be wrong for himself.

The Apostle teaches in 1 Cor. xii: "As oft as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come." The Lord's death was designed for the destruction of sin, and the gathering together of the children of God into one fold. If the church knowingly takes unrepentant sinners to the communion, she cannot show forth the Lord's death, for the following reasons: He that commits sin is of the devil, and the Son of God was made manifest that he might destroy the works of the devil. If the work of the devil is destroyed in any one, he will not commit willful sin, and, therefore, can show forth the Lord's death; but a sinner cannot show forth his death. If the church knowingly admits a sinner to the communion she transgresses the doctrine of Christ and is under judgment. "Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and the table of devils."

(1 Cor. x:21.) "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth. (1 John 1:6.)

It is certainly walking in darkness when saint and sinner indiscriminately partake of the emblems of Christ's broken body and shed blood, professing to commemorate his suffering and death. "For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep." (1 Cor. xi:29, 30.)

The church is Christ's body. It behooves every faithful member to review the church, or discern it, to learn whether the members are united in love and confidence, and are living godly lives not only on communion occasions, but at all times. He cannot suffer sin to rest on any of his brethren. Christians should at all times be able, when they meet, to sit in heavenly places and have their conversation in heaven. If the members become careless and love grows cold, and evil fruits appear, and they in this state break the bread and drink the cup, they bring condemnation upon themselves, not discerning the Lord's body; losing sight of the power of Christ's death. When the church gets into such a condition that she

fails to separate offenders, then sincere members will be distressed, and many will become spiritually sick and weak, and many will sleep, losing sight of the true character of the church, consoling themselves with the idea that as the ministers pass matters thus, they will not be accountable. Oh, sad, pitiful and mournful condition for souls that were once enlightened.

Many of our learned friends apply the language of Paul, thus: Discerning the Lord's body means to reflect upon and consider seriously the suffering and death of our Lord; and as the bread and wine represent the body and blood, it should be partaken of with due seriousness and solemnity, and not eaten in a light and thoughtless manner. All of this is true, but if that was all the apostle meant, why did he say that the neglect of discerning the Lord's body produced weakness, sickness and sleep? There are many persons who go to what is called communion in a light, worldly minded way, and yet those effects do not apparently follow; they do not naturally get weak or sick. It should be apparent, therefore, to every one that the purity of the church is the principle involved in the text.

Christ's ministers are moved by love for

the welfare of souls to preach the unadulterated doctrine of Christ. They watch for souls; they feed the flock with the bread of life; they comfort the feeble-minded, warn the unruly and reprove those that sin, that others may fear, without respect of person. They stand upon the watch towers of Zion and cry aloud: "Awake! awake! put on thy strength, O Zion! put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem!"

SCRIPTURAL EXCOMMUNICATION.

According to scriptural testimony, excommunicated persons are to be held in avoidance by every member until they are again restored to the communion of the church. Our Savior says, "Let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican."

All attentive readers will discover that at the time Christ was upon earth, Judea was a Roman province, ruled by a governor appointed by Cæsar. The sceptre had departed from Judah and the Jews had not the right to inflict capital punishment; therefore they instituted the ban. If a Jew accepted the office of a publican, or tax collector, he was looked upon as a heathen, and was avoided by all faithful Jews. It is said that such were not allowed to enter the temple. That the Jews refused social inter-

course and natural dealings with the heathen is apparent. When our Savior asked the Samaritan woman for a drink of water, she replied, "How is it that thou being a Jew askest drink of me which am a woman of Samaria, for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans."

When Peter came to the house of Cornelius, the Roman Centurion, he said unto them, "Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come into one of another nation." "But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat." (1 Cor. v:11.) The context clearly proves that the apostle had reference to social intercouse. "And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed." (2 Thess. iii:14.)

By the law as given in Deut. xiii:6-12, every Israelite was bound to defend the honor of his God and uphold the integrity of his law, without respecting the person of man. If the transgressor proved to be the nearest and dearest earthly friend, it still became a duty to assist in his prosecution

and punishment, even unto death, when the crime was a capital offense. The design of this severe economy was to preserve the Israelites from falling into idolatry, and for the preservation of the knowledge of the one only and true God. These reasons for punishing apostates by death do not now exist; but instead Christ instituted the ban, which was based upon love, having in view the safety and purity of the church, and the recovery of the apostate.

The law of Moses applied only to the Israelites. It was only apostate brethren who were to be put to death, not heathen idolaters, and so it is with the spiritual Israel. Paul says, "What have I to do to judge them that are without? Do not ye judge them that are within? God will judge them that are without."

When Christ used the language, "Let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican," the disciples being Jews and acquainted with Jewish customs, understood him. He introduced a form of discipline with which they were very familiar. The Jews had not the spirit of love, hence they practiced the ban in a legal and severe manner. Christ did not intend that his disciples should ban apostates in the same spirit that the Jews did. He knew full

well when they would be regenerated and had received his spirit, their hearts would be filled with charity. They would ban fallen members out of pure love, for their repentance and recovery. They would not hold them as enemies, but admonish them as brethren.

RESPONSIBILITY OF PROFESSORS.

Solomon says, "It is better not to vow, than to vow and not to pay." It is a solemn and responsible act to make a public profession of faith in Christ, and to promise lifelong allegiance to him. It is especially criminal to do despite to the spirit of grace; to treat the covenant wherewith one is sanctified as an unholy thing, and to deny Christ by again yielding to the spirit of the world.

Backsliders, or fallen believers, are under a heavier judgment than those who never knew the truth. The unprofitable servant who did not put his master's talent to usury confessed, "I knew thee, that thou reapest where thou hast not sown, and gatherest where thou hast not strewn." His Lord replied, "Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, because thou knewest those things, thou oughtest have put my talent to usury."

The parable may be explained thus: "I

knew thee," implies that every Christian has experienced the spirituality of the holy law. It became a mirror through which he viewed the purity and the holiness of God, and by which he realized that by the deeds of the law no one can be justified. He further learned thereby that every secret work of man, and all wicked thoughts and unhallowed desires will be called into judgment, since God is not the author of them. The law is a chastening rod to impel the Christian to seek refuge in Christ; after which he is entreated to watch and pray, to be steadfast and immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. Also to add to his faith, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness and charity. He is comforted with the assurance that if he abounds in the divine virtues he shall never fail, but if he lack these things the light will depart from him and he will become enveloped in darkness. The unfaithful servant made confession that he had attained to the above knowledge, but failed to profit by it, hence his severe sentence. From the foregoing it is apparent that the church should hold her fallen members in avoidance in order that they may be awakened to their true condition.

The evangelical ban forbids social inter-

course, such as associating in business relations and practicing the same social freedom in conversation and company as we exercise toward others, since it is designed to keep the apostate in mind of the divine judgment under which he lies bound, that he may repent and be released. It enjoins the duty of "Admonishing him as a brother;" that is, inquire into his spiritual exercise, admonish him unto repentance and restoration to Jesus Christ and his church. If he is sick, visit him; if needy, give him aid.

The ban, or avoidance of excommunicated members, is ignored by nearly all professors of religion, notwithstanding it is so plainly taught by Christ and his apostles, and was so diligently practiced by the church during the sixteenth century, when she stood forth so gloriously in her practice and advocacy of sound doctrine.

CONCLUSION.

In conclusion we would earnestly invite the attention of our dear friends who profess the Christian religion, and who are members of one or the other of the many religious organizations, to the truths presented in this tract. We are fully conscious of our very limited ability as a writer. What

we have written has been done in love, with a desire to advance the best interest of souls, and for the extension of Christ's kingdom and the honor of his holy name. We are painfully impressed that many of our friends are in error, and are not aware of it. The prevailing sentiment is, All is well, Christianity is progressing.

There are many religious organizations formed in the interest of the popular churches, such as Young Men's Christian Associations, and Christian Endeavor societies, which along with many others are powerful auxiliaries to the church. We are distressed in soul when we contemplate the untiring zeal and systematized effort for the Christianizing of the world. Why should we be distressed? The reason is that the doctrine of Christ is transgressed by those who profess such undying zeal for his honor.

The present effort for the professed evangelization of man is a stupendous one. If we could recognize it as a Christian work, we would aid it with all the grace God would bestow. But we cannot recognize it as such, because all of the popular churches engaged in the work, allow unchristian liberties, among which are, going to law, retaining known sinners in the church, upholding and defending divisions even to the

extent of maintaining separate and distinct organizations, baptism of infants without scriptural authority, conforming to the world in its mirth and pleasure-seeking, and in the excessive adorning of the body and of the extravagant building and furnishing of houses, and so forth. We cannot recognize these things as a Christian work, since it substitutes a system involving a high civilization and advanced state of morality, for obedience to the self-denying doctrine of Christ and the apostles. They may not consent to be doing this, but it is nevertheless a fact. It is a profession of faith in Christ without obedience to his commands. A zeal for the conversion of sinners to the respective creeds, and for their recovery from immorality and intemperance is substituted for obedience to the plain commands of Christ.

If this work of advancing civilization and morality were carried forward under the name of moralization, we would support it, as would every lover of good morals. Popular religion is elevating the standard of citizenship, strengthening the commonwealth; and we admire the work as far as it accomplishes the amelioration of mankind. But what troubles us is that the present system of religious faith and practice

is not in agreement with the doctrine of Christ; that is, with unity, peace and purity; and therefore it becomes a hindrance to many souls in attaining to a spiritual state, such as living faith in Christ, purity of heart, humility, meekness and separation from the world. There is so little self-denial connected with the popular idea of the Christian religion. All liberty for worldly enjoyment that any respectable man would desire is allowed, such as living in the pride of life, gaining applause, seeking glory by charity and works of benevolence, indulging in levity, wit and humor, in folly and amusement, and in all manner of games and diversions exempt from immorality; all under the holy guise of having consecrated the affections of the heart and the powers of the mind to the advancement of God's glory. Hence the accessions to the churches are large; but will it not be a fearful disappointment if at the great and coming day they should hear the appalling declaration, "I never knew thee," which Christ declares shall be spoken to those who entered not in at the straight gate and walked not upon the narrow way. As all must consent that no one can be a Christian without obeying Christ, then we would ask, how can we be Christians when we claim the right to defend our reputation, our person and our property, either by personal violence or by process of law, when Christ expressly teaches "resist not evil?" How can we be followers of the Lord Jesus when we retain known sinners in the church, and admit them to communion, con-

trary to the doctrine of Christ and the teaching of his apostles?

Dear reader, reflect on the importance of hearing and obeying Christ and his apostles, and ever remember that his words will judge us at the last and coming day. The above facts are fully admitted by many friends, but they apparently are not willing to obey the light, or do not know what to do. Our counsel is: Consider whether any people can claim to be the church of Christ, who wilfully transgress his doctrine. There is no middle ground. Those organizations called churches, are either what they claim to be, or they are not. If they disobey Christ's commands they are not his people, nor his church. It will then become the duty of every sincere soul who holds membership in a church which does not comply with Gospel teaching to obey Paul's injunction to his Corinthian converts to restrain them from idolatry and disobedience: "Come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord." The prophet in Isa. 52:11 delivered a similar charge to his brethren to the same end.

The law demanded strict obedience to its commands, and every transgression had its penalty; and under the Gospel dispensation every departure from sound doctrine makes us guilty. The separation from spiritual idolatry is forcibly taught in Rev. 18:4-8. Even the observance of any ordinance or ceremony not commanded by the Lord is idolatry. Hence the only safe way is a strict conformity to the doctrine of Christ and his apostles. Many honest souls are

perplexed on account of the indifference shown by the ministry and officers of their church to the unchristian conduct and entire lack of the Christ-life of many of the members, and seem to be at a loss to know what to do. A careful and prayerful reading of the New Testament will open a way. It declares that "Whosoever transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ hath not God." Many well-disposed persons comfort themselves that if they do well they are free from the transgressions of their fellow-members. While it is true that they are not chargeable with the sins of others, yet they are responsible for their neglect of duty toward their erring brethren, which is so plainly outlined in Matt. 18:15-17.

Paul in 1 Cor. 12:14-27 defines the relation each to the other of the members of the church by a comparison with the members of the natural body, in which there must be harmony and not schisms. A spiritually enlightened person will not let sin rest upon a fellow-church member. If there is occasion for reproof and the ministry and officers of the church neglect or refuse to co-operate with the offended member and reprove sin, there then remains but one consistent way for the aggrieved and offended member, that of separation and withdrawal from such unfaithful worshippers. Some at this point are much embarrassed because of having made a vow of faithful obedience and having received the ordinances. If the church does not keep the commandments it is not the church of

Christ, and the vow binds them to obedience to God and his word, not to any sect, and the word commands separation from such as are not faithful. The ordinances are God's ordinances only when administered and received by truly enlightened souls standing in the living faith. When observed by any body of professors who do not accept and observe the entire Gospel of Christ and his apostles they are not his ordinances.

We are aware of the fact that such statements as the above will be treated with scorn and contempt, by many of our learned friends. If we were to consider the number, popularity, power and great learning of the ministers of the so-called Christian churches and their co-laborers, and then compare our small number, weak state and general illiteracy with them, we might well conclude to withhold our protest; but we are deeply impressed with the fact that the word of the Lord endureth forever, and if we are in opposition to it, it will stand against us at the day of final accounts.

Beloved fellow believers and joint heirs of the eternal inheritance, allow me to address you in a few words of caution and comfort, for we live in a perilous time. Dangers beset us on every hand, and we may have a form of godliness and yet be lacking the power thereof. The power will manifest itself in the love for Jesus and his holy word; a love to read it and a delight in meditating upon it in watchfulness and prayerfulness, in the love of the brethren, and in zeal for the salvation of all

men. We may hold the doctrine of the unity, peace and purity of the church and also have the outward form of godliness; we might separate from unfaithful worship, in short attend to all the forms of religion, and yet be spiritually dead.

We are called upon to shine as lights in the world, and we should walk in love toward all men; be given to hospitality, kind to the poor, relieving their necessities according to our ability. Our yea should be yea, and our nay should be nay, providing things honest in the sight of all men. A great responsibility devolves upon us. By our chaste, humble, meek and pure lives, we should show forth a light that will lighten the way for wayfaring souls. The evangelist says of Christ: "In him was life, and the life was the light of men." So the life of Christ in us should give forth a lustre that will aid poor souls in their effort to find the narrow way of life.

One special danger to which we are exposed is that of losing the simplicity, freedom and love among ourselves. There should be no wounded feelings unheeded, no barrier to perfect freedom. We should ever be able to sit down together in heavenly places and have our conversation in heaven. Our affections should be detached from earthly possessions, and we should be possessed of living faith; casting all our cares upon the Lord who careth for us.

Beloved, if we remain steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, great will be our reward. If we are faithful to conviction, and the dictates of

the Spirit, we shall overcome. "To him that overcometh, it shall be given to be clothed in white raiment, his name shall not be blotted out of the book of life, but I will confess him before my Father and the holy angels." "He that overcometh shall inherit all things." "Unto them that look for him shall he come the second time without sin unto salvation." "Finally, brethren, farewell, be of good comfort, live in peace, and so may the God of peace be with you ever." Amen.

Those of our dear friends who make no profession of religion, we entreat you for Jesus' sake, repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Forsake the world, bear the cross, confess your Saviour, hear and obey him, and he will bless and strengthen you; he will enlighten, comfort and seal you unto the day of final redemption. But if you remain unwilling to confess Christ and forsake the world, remember that there shall come "Tribulation and anguish upon every soul that doeth evil." You may be possessed of light and knowledge to know the requirements of the gospel; you may be able to prove professed Christians by their lives and actions; you may also be morally honest and have adopted a high moral standard of life: but remember that with all these attainments you are still an unsaved sinner. We entreat you in the name of Jesus who shed his precious blood that your souls might be reclaimed; we beseech you in behalf of your immortal souls which bear the image of your Maker, repent,

forsake sin, do not delay, "Seek the Lord while he may be found."

To those of our friends who have fallen into vice and immorality, who often are covered with confusion and shame, and who at times well nigh despair, we would say, obey your convictions, confess your sins, there is grace abounding for you. Christ died to save sinners. O, therefore, come with all your sins, and be unburdened; Christ has wrought redemption for such as you.

We cordially commend our unworthy effort and the beloved reader to the God of grace, that he may prosper every sincere motive to the promotion of his glory and to the eternal happiness of our souls. Amen.

JACOB S. LEHMAN,

May, 1911 Chambersburg, Pa.

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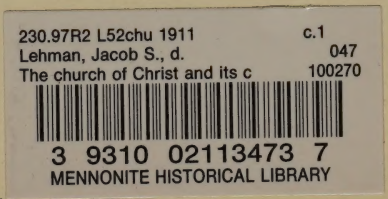

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